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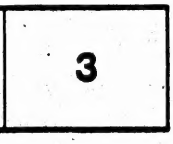

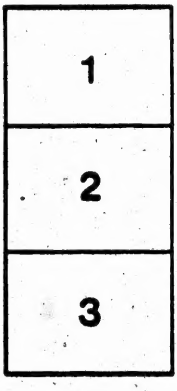

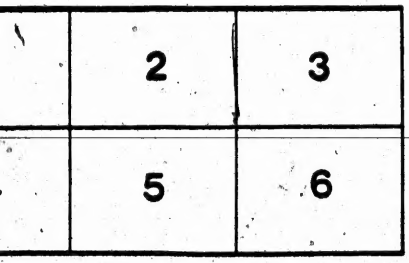

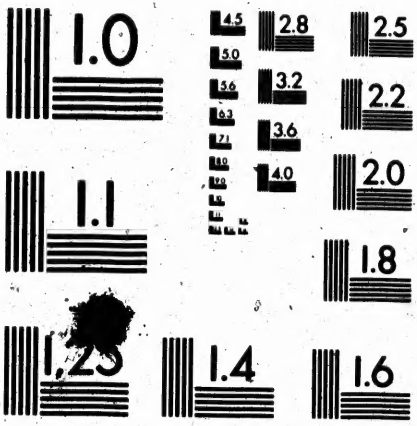

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A MANUAL

OF THE

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE POLITY

OF THE

C. W. METHODIST

New Connexion Church.

BY THOMAS GOLDSMITH,

MINISTER IN THE CONNEXION.

"One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

LONDON, C. W.:

PRINTED AT THE CONFERENCE OFFICE, DUNDAS STREET, EAST.

1859.

PREFACE.

Though free to confess that this little work is not free from defects, yet the author cannot but hope that it will meet a desideratum long felt in our church, viz., a brief but lucid statement of the distinguishing features of our church polity. It may be objected against this performance, that the history it cites of our Connexion is so rapid as to divest it of much that would be of high interest to the reader, and especially to our church members. To this we would reply, we have felt the temptation to extend our historic sketch, but the consideration that the design of this little manual was not to chronicle the history of the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion Church, but to give a brief exposition and defence of its principles, has restrained us to only so much as we deemed indispensible to mark the progress of the Connexion. We have kept the idea of brevity continually before us, and in all the facts stated, and arguments elaborated, we have condensed as far as we judged consistent with clearness.

In the statement of our principles, we are not conscious of having suppressed anything, or overcolored in any particular. For the correctness of statement we confidently appeal to our published Discipline.

To give additional value to this little treatise, we have inserted a chapter setting forth the privileges and duties of church members, thus putting into the hands of all who may read this little book, a copy of our church rules.

The Scripture argument contained in the fourth chapter, is a very brief one, and yet we cherish the hope that it may be found conclusive and satisfactory, to the honest enquirer. We regret that space would not allow of extending the argument to greater length, and also of citing the usages of the primitive

churches in ecclesiastical administration. Such a range of argument, however, would require a volume, rather than a short chapter in a manual.

The author would add, for the statements and arguments contained in this manual he alone is responsible. Though encouraged by many of our ministers and by the Conference, to proceed with the work, still no supervision or control has been exercised by connexional authorities, leaving the author entirely responsible for the performance.

Should this little manual be found to serve the church, by leading its members to a higher appreciation of their privileges, and a more sedulous discharge of their duties, or should it correct the *false* views of those who regard us as *mere divisionists*, the object of this work will be gained, and, while ascribing the glory to God, the author's most sanguine hopes will be realised.

WHITCHURCH, August 16, 1859.

A MANUAL, &c.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN AND PROGRESS.

The Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion Church is one in doctrines and ordinances, with all the members of the great Methodist family; and, therefore, to detail the doctrines we believe and preach would be simply to give an account of the doctrines of Methodism. But as our object in this little manual is to point out what are the *distinctive features* of our organization, we regard doctrines as irrelevant to our design;—for these we must refer the reader to our published Discipline. We regard it as a significant fact, that amid all the numerous secessions from the Wesleyan Methodist body of England, and the Episcopal Methodists of the United States, none have seceded on the ground of *doctrines* or church *ordinances*. In every instance, the seceding body has taken exception to the polity of the parent body, and has organized on a more liberal and popular basis—a fact we regard as furnishing strong presumptive evidence that the doctrines of Methodism are invulnerable, but that the government of the parent body requires modification and improvement.

The Methodist New Connexion was the first seceding

body from the Wesleyans of England. This secession occurred A. D. 1797, soon after the death of the venerable John Wesley. The following were the points that led to the division, and the establishment of the New Connexion Church:—

1. "The right of the people to hold their public religious worship at such hours as were most convenient, without their being restricted to the mere intervals of the hours appointed for service in the Established Church."

2. "The right of the people to receive the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper from the hands of their own ministers, and in their own places of worship."

3. "The right of the people to a representation in the District Meetings, and in the annual Conference; and thereby to assist in the government of the community, and in the appropriation of its funds."

4. "The right of the church to have a voice, through its local business meetings, in the reception and expulsion of members, the choice of local officers, and in the calling of candidates for the ministry."

None of these privileges were enjoyed by the Methodist Church prior to the secession of 1797, when the Methodist New Connexion Church was organized to enfranchise the members of Christ's family with the privileges chartered to them in the word of God.

The Canadian Wesleyans seceded from the Episcopal Methodists in A. D. 1829, on the following grounds, viz.:—

1. A thorough lay representation in all the councils of the church. And, secondly, on the ground of the anomalous position occupied by the Episcopal Methodists in Canada, as being under the jurisdiction of a Conference in

the United States, and legally disqualified for performing marriages, &c., in the British Provinces.

The importance of the latter ground of difference, soon after the secession became apparent to the old body; and they, likewise, withdrew from the Conference of the United States. That many things of a personal, and perhaps we may add of an unworthy character, mingled in the discussions of those exciting times, on both sides of the controversy, will surprise none who are acquainted with the weakness of human nature, even as it exists in good men; but yet we contend that great principles lay at the foundation of the controversy, and substantial good resulted to the cause of God from the secession. And yet we apprehend danger in estimating the true character of men as they mingle in the controversy of these times, and setting down to the account of angry passions what properly belongs to a firm adherence to truth and principles, and energy (perhaps not always wisely directed) in defending them. From the distance we have reached from those times—when many of those who were foremost in the controversy are fallen asleep, and others, from infirmities of age, are incapacitated for the active duties of itinerant life—we may safely look back over the past, and dispassionately estimate the principles that were staked in the issue. Much as we deprecate divisions in the church, and deeply as we lament the alienation of feeling amongst the members of Christ's family,—yet we regard these as vastly to be preferred to a supine indifference to the purity and rectitude of the church in her doctrines and discipline. Nor are we among the number of those who regard the divisions that have occurred in the Methodist Church as an unmitigated evil. We believe that more good than evil has flowed out

of these. Better principles of church government have been adopted by the seceding bodies; and these have, to some extent, reacted upon the parent body, to modify and improve its administrations.

It is a somewhat curious fact, that the Canadian Wesleyan Church, seceding from the Episcopal Methodists in A. D. 1829, should have established themselves on principles of church government identical with those of the Methodist New Connexion, established in 1797, without any previous knowledge of the existence of that body; and it was not till 1840 that these two bodies became acquainted with each other, and the following year a union of the two was consummated. This union, fraught with so many happy circumstances and consequences to our cause in Canada, occurred at a time and under circumstances that clearly indicate the hand of God.

Though the number of those who sympathised with Revds. Henry Ryan and James Jackson, and their coadjutors, was very large; yet, when the time of secession and organization came, and friendly pretensions were put to the test, the majority fell off like autumn leaves in the tempest —leaving a mere handful to sacrifice and do service for principle. The first few years of our history present a series of successes and reverses. Though the distinguishing features of our polity were evidently founded on reason and revelation, and were well adapted to our country and age, yet we had on the one hand old and thorough organizations to cope with: on the other, our organization was of necessity imperfect, and much of the material composing our itinerancy was crude and untried; and then we were to a great extent without funds to meet Connexional emergencies or develope available resources, our ministers with-

out parsonages for their families or chapels for their congregations — all these circumstances combined to try the strength and endurance of our Fathers, and to sift the Connexion to the last degree. Under this trial of faith and principle, some of our ministers abandoned all hope of the enterprise, and increased our difficulties by forsaking our ranks, and seeking a home and sustenance for themselves and families in the ministry of other churches, and persuading their friends to follow their example. Others, unwilling to abandon their principles, and unable to sustain themselves and families on their receipts from their circuits, were compelled to locate and follow some secular calling, and labor at the same time on the circuit so far as they were able; while some, amid suffering and sacrifice, continued to labor in the itinerant field, with undivided energy, till the morning broke and the day star of hope rose upon our Zion. *All honor to those veteran worthies* of our Connexion! Some of them have "fallen asleep," some through infirmity have been laid aside from the activities of the itinerancy, while a small number is still in our ranks; and, though with impaired energies, yet with unabated zeal doing service in our Zion. May their successors prove worthy of such a parentage!

In 1835 the Connexion reached about the maximum of its numerical strength and influence prior to the union of 1841. Then it possessed 21 preachers, 42 local preachers, 13 circuits, 2481 members. The minutes of Conference, up to the time of the union, give no account of Connexional property. Our country, at that early day, possessed few of the advantages that we inherit now, but it is well for us to remember that our monetary, social, intellectual, and religious advantages were secured to us by the privations

and sufferings of our predecessors. Our Connexion, at this early day, possessed but few chapels, and those of a rude character, and for parsonages our ministers had to occupy such houses as they could find available on their Circuits. About this time the Connexion became involved in weighty responsibilities in a printing establishment, which, combined with the treachery of some in whom the Conference reposed confidence, threatened, for a time, to overwhelm the Connexion. By this unfortunate circumstance the resources of the Connexion, already inadequate to meet the necessities of our ministers, were drained to meet the emergency, and preserve the honor of the church. In this emergency many of the faint-hearted flew off and rang the tocsin of our defeat and dissolution throughout the Province. A few noble spirits, however, resolved to breast the storm and save the ship, or go down with the wreck! Long and dark was the night of trial, and when the bravest hearts began to fear amid the moanings of the storm and the crash of billows, the Head of the church came treading the angry waters, and saying, "peace, be still."

Some idea may be formed of this Connexional crisis by comparing the statistics of 1841, the time of the union, with the foregoing statistics of 1885. In 1841 we had only 14 circuits, and 1915 of a membership. Notwithstanding a considerable number was added by the union, who belonged to the New Connexion in Eastern Canada, still, in six years, we lost 566 members. General discouragement seized all hearts, and paralyzed our energies.

In 1840 the Rev. John Addyman, a minister of the Methodist New Connexion, who had been sent by the Conference in England to enquire into the spiritual condition of Canada, and to establish a mission in this country,

made a tour in Western Canada, to reconnoitre for mission purposes, and coming in contact with the Canadian Wesleyans in Hamilton, and finding that the principles of government were similar in the two bodies, the terms of union were drawn up and submitted to the Connexion, both in Canada and in England, and having received the approval of both parties, the union was ratified in 1841.—By this union the Connexion in Canada received a considerable increase to its numbers in Canada East, and also relief in its financial embarrassments. This union was alike creditable to both parties. The following are the terms of union:—

1. That the local preachers now in the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist church be entitled to stand in the same relation to the united body, and enjoy the same privileges they now do in the Canadian Wesleyan church; and all local preachers hereafter received shall submit to the rules, and graduate according to the regulations of the Methodist New Connexion, and enjoy such privileges as it provides.

2. That the forms for sacraments, marriages, and ordination of Elders used among the Canadian Wesleyans be retained.

3. That the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist circuit preachers be received into the united body according to their various standings in that community.

4. That for the present the name of the United body be the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion.

5. That twenty pounds per annum (subject to future alteration, as the case may require,) be allowed from the English Missionary Fund towards the support of a married, and twelve pounds per annum towards the support of a single preacher. These sums to form the maximum of

allowance, and that it be left to the discretion of the Superintendent of Missions, with the assistance of the Conference, to apportion the grants, with a due regard to economy and the necessities of each particular case.

6. That a Paternal and Beneficent Fund be established, for the encouragement of which the Missionary Society agree to grant the sum of thirty pounds annually to each Fund, until, in the judgment of the Conference, it shall not be longer necessary.

7. The Canadian Conference to have the direction of the work in Canada, assisted by the representative of the Methodist New Connexion in England, as the Superintendent of the Mission, who shall be a member of the Canadian Conference, *ex officio*, and corresponding member of the Annual Committee. It will be the duty of said representative, or general superintendent, to see that all engagements connected with claims on the Mission Fund are faithfully performed, and to assist the Conference to carry out the benevolent plans contemplated by the union.

8. That to ensure, so far as prudential means can accomplish the object, a supply of suitable preachers for the wants of the united body, the Wesleyville Institution be established to afford the means of instruction for a limited period. And that in the first instance suitable young men, connected with the religious community in Canada, be selected, or young men recommended from England by the Missionary Committee.

9. That the stations of the Methodist New Connexion in the eastern part of this province, formerly called Lower Canada, be united with the Canadian Conference.

10. As missionary exertions are employed to gather precious souls into the church of Christ, and extend the

Redeemer's Kingdom, so the exertions of the English Methodist New Connexion Missionary Society will be directed to the establishment of an active, prosperous, and permanent distinct community in Canada; that, as this end is attained by the formation of Circuits, the introduction of the system, and the Missionary Stations becoming so many parts of the body, in that proportion the influence of the English Connexion shall cease in its concerns, and the body in Canada shall become a distinct religious community, united only to the brethren in England in Christian love; and in those kind offices which will always be proper and acceptable."

Such was the basis of the union 1841—alike honorable to both parties, and in its consequences most salutary to the united body. No restrictive or *veto* powers were claimed by our brethren in England, and none given. The body possesses all the untrammelled powers of legislation and of administration that it did before the union. We have simply united the energies and resources of the two bodies for the better accomplishment of our great work in Canada. Here was opened to our brethren in England an important sphere of usefulness in the great work of Christian missions in Canada on the one hand; and on the other, timely aid was rendered to the suffering interests of the Canadian body. From the time of union to the present, our history has been one of progress. Passing over three years of our history since the time of the union brings us to 1844, when we had 27 chapels, 34 ministers, 38 local preachers, 23 circuits, and 3,300 members. It was during this year that our Colonial Missionary Society, auxiliary to the New Connexion Missionary Society in

England was organized, and as a kind of first fruits of this Society's operations, we realized the sum of £198 8s. 11d. Though this was a small sum to realize from the number of our membership for the cause of missions, yet, regarded as the first effort of the society, it was by no means discouraging. The united body had been, in the meantime, since the union, building chapels and parsonages, and otherwise giving solidity and extension to the Connexion. The increase of the Connexion during the first three years of its existence as a united body was, 1 minister, 26 local preachers, 9 circuits and 1,385 members. During these three years our numbers were increased nearly one-half, while increased measures for greater efficiency were organized, investing the cause with the cheering aspects of a more promising future.

Six years more of our Connexional history conduct us to 1850, when we had 49 chapels, 43 ministers, 82 local preachers, 34 circuits, and 4,173 members, while our mission fund receipts had risen to £436 17s. 9d. The increase in the Connexion during these six years was as follows: 22 chapels, 9 ministers, 44 local preachers, 11 circuits, and 873 members, while the Mission Fund showed an increase of £243 8s. 10d. Though the increase during these six years was not large, yet the above figures, showing an increase in every department, give evidence that the Connexion was in a sound and prosperous condition.

Another six years, and we have reached 1856, when we have 84 chapels, 56 ministers, 97 local preachers, 43 circuits, 4,755 members—the mission fund having risen to £1,255 5s. The increase in the Connexion during these six years was, 35 chapels, 13 ministers, 15 local preachers,

9 circuits, 582 members, while the mission fund had increased £818 7s. 3d. The increase of the last six years, while it shows an advance in the numbers of preachers, circuits and members, is especially cheering in relation to our chapels and contributions to our mission fund. The Connexion, during this time, has been doing more for the future than for the present, and is rather in a state of preparation than full development. The increase of 35 new chapels, and the increase of our annual receipts for missions raised from our circuits of £818 7s. 3d. show that our material and influential resources for good are largely increased, and that there are *hearts* in the work. We should expect, from these increased facilities, that when we hear again from this work that we should be cheered with success proportioned to the increased resources.

Three years more carry us to 1859, and now we have 112 chapels, and 22 in process of erection—in all 134; we have also 29 parsonages, and one in course of erection —30 in all; 66 ministers, 121 local preachers, 7033 members, 93 Sabbath schools, 500 teachers, and 3585 scholars; the receipts of our mission this year, £1008 5s. 7d. The increase during these three years is as follows: 28 chapels, besides 22 building; 10 ministers, 25 local preachers, 12 circuits, 2,278 members; the mission fund has receded £246 19s. 5d. The falling off from our mission fund has arisen from the extreme financial depression that has crippled every enterprise in our country. It will be observed, however, that notwithstanding the monetary depression, there has been great energy in chapel building, and otherwise consolidating our Connexional interests. The great Head of the church has smiled upon

these efforts, and more than 2,000 souls have been gathered into the church during the last three years.

Surely we may say, "What hath God wrought!" Since 1841, the time of the union, to 1859, only eighteen years, the Connexion has increased its membership almost four-fold! It has organized a missionary society whose receipts are more than £1000 per annum; its ministry has increased more than three-fold; its staff of local preachers has increased almost four-fold; it has erected about 100 chapels, and from 20 to 30 parsonages; it has organized about 90 Sabbath schools, employed 500 teachers, and collected over 3000 scholars! Surely, if we have not "done what we could," we have at least done *something* toward evangelizing Canada; and if the tokens of divine presence and approval have not been so signal and abundant with us as with some other portions of the Christian church, they have been, at least, sufficient to increase our responsibilities, awaken our gratitude, and stimulate our zeal.

In the above statement of members we have included those on trial, because they are actually in connection with the church, though not in full communion; but, principally, because this distinction in our published minutes is of recent origin, and, therefore, to show the regular increase, we deemed it necessary to aggregate the members and those on trial in one statement.

The Methodist New Connexion in England have now held their sixty-third annual Conference. The minutes of their Conference for 1859 show a decided improvement in every department of their work. Without any diminution of cash grant to Ireland and Canada, they have fairly embarked in a mission to China, and sent thither two

missionaries; they are also arranging for a mission in Australia, and it is hoped that in a few months one or more missionaries will be on their way to that country. They have also been spiritedly engaged during the last few years in working home missions, which has occasioned a large outlay of mission money for the sustentation of their missionaries, and the erection of chapels, &c., but which has resulted most favorably to the body—both as to its spirituality and numerical importance. They have now in England 342 chapels, 116 circuit preachers, 976 local preachers, 21,344 members, 2,077 members on trial, 356 Sabbath schools, 3,843 S. S. teachers, and 54,029 scholars. They have in Ireland 10 chapels, 6 circuit preachers, 8 local preachers, 525 members, 69 on trial, 8 S. schools, 96 S. S. teachers, and 690 scholars.

The aggregate of our Connexion is as follows: 28,306 members, and 2,742 members on trial—making an aggregate of 31,048; we have 464 chapels, and 22 in process of building in Canada, and how many in Europe building we are not advised; 188 circuit preachers, 1,105 local preachers, 458 S. schools, 9,451 S. S. teachers, and 58,166 S. S. scholars.

Never, since our organization in 1797, have we experienced a year of such general prosperity in all departments of our church-enterprise as the one just closed. While the past furnishes us with sufficient ground for humiliation, it at the same time affords motives to gratitude and increased exertion; and while we would take to ourselves shame and confusion that so little has been done, to God we would ascribe the glory for the measure of success that

has attended our efforts. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the glory, for Thy right hand and Thy holy arm hath gotten thee the victory."

CHAPTER II.

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES.

Our object in this chapter is to give a compendious statement of the characteristic and distinguishing features of the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion Church. While we would not depreciate the systems or doings of others, we wish clearly to set forth our own. We deprecate bigotry as inconsistent with the catholic spirit of the Christian; but, at the same time, we regard a distinct knowledge and hearty approval of the principles of the church of our choice, as highly commendable in the members of a Christian church. The great distinguishing feature of the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion Church is, that it preserves the balance of power between the ministry and the laity—thus securing "liberty without licentiousness, and order without despotism."—Moreover, uniting all in the councils of the church, it seeks to enlist the sympathies, talents and energies of all in promoting the interests of the church and the glory of God. From her highest church court down to her leaders' meeting she unites the laity with the minister—in council, in responsibility, and in labor.

LEADERS' MEETING.

This meeting is composed of the ministers of the Circuit, the stewards, leaders of classes, and persons chosen by

female classes to represent them. This meeting is held once a week, or so often as the necessities of the case may require, or the convenience of the members allow. The business of this meeting comprises the payment of class monies into the hands of the steward; directing or sanctioning the disbursement of church monies; examining the class books, noting the attendance of the several classes, and inquiring after the sick, that the sick may be visited and the negligent admonished; filling up vacancies and electing new officers; determining on notices for the pulpit and the times of such announcements, and superintending the general interests of the society. This meeting is the ministers' standing council, in devising means of usefulness, both as respects the conversion of sinners and the edification and building up of the church. This important church council unites the ministry with the laity, in projecting plans of usefulness, enforcing discipline and promoting the interests—financial, social and spiritual, of the church. Here the minister and the church over which he presides are held in concert, and while the church gives its counsel, it stands pledged to the administration of its minister as its executive officer, and he, on the other hand, stands pledged to carry out the decisions of his leaders' meeting.

SOCIETY MEETINGS.

The society meeting is convened at the instance of the minister and society stewards. The province of this meeting is the spiritual edification of the church by prayer, admonition, exhortation, etc.; also reading of our Church Discipline, and enforcing personal obligations. It is also

the business of this meeting to elect society stewards—to receive the society's financial statements, to express freely their views in relation to candidates proposed for the ministry, the election of representatives to the quarterly Conference, and the nomination of class leaders. The functions of this meeting are of high importance, vitally implicating the interests of the church. While it is called conjointly by the minister and society stewards, it is composed of the entire society, all of whom have the right to take part in the discussions and decisions of the meeting. By this meeting it is sought to acquaint all with the financial as well as spiritual resources of the church, to urge upon all personal responsibilities, and to awaken to individual, as as well as united effort, the entire membership.

QUARTERLY MEETINGS.

These meetings are held in February, May, August and November, at such time and place as shall be agreed upon. They are composed of the ministers of the circuit, the circuit stewards, the secretary of the local preachers' meeting, and the representatives chosen, instructed and sent by the several classes. Each society sends one or more representatives, according to the number of its members, the proportion or scale of representation, being fixed by the May quarterly meeting of each circuit, and also the mode of taking the vote for the representatives; but free admission is secured to all members of the church to the quarterly conference, with the right of giving their opinions, subject to the regulation of the chairman, and of a majority of the meeting, but are not allowed to vote. This is the highest local church court, and is composed of members freely chosen by

the several classes, to represent their views and transact the business of the circuit. Its business is to pay the salary and incidental expenses of its ministers, according to discipline, and all other just demands against the circuit. This meeting also determines what each society shall contribute toward defraying circuit expenses, keeping in mind the number, ability and privileges of each society. It determines on any alteration in the number of circuit ministers, takes up new preaching appointments, or sets aside those that have been tried to no purpose. It has power to make application to the annual committee for temporary supplies of preaching during the sickness of its preacher or for any additional labor that may be required. This meeting, moreover, determines on any matters of appeal, or refers them to the annual conference for final decision. It admits persons on the plan as exhorters or local preachers, passes them through the several stages of their probation and receives them into full relation. It recommends such of its local preachers as it deems prudent to be taken out into our itinerancy, and finally, it appoints or confirms the appointment of the lay representative to the annual conference, and provides him and its minister with all necessary instructions and credentials. This meeting, taking the oversight, both of the temporalities and spiritualities of the church, and being also the highest circuit court of appeal, unites in council the representatives freely chosen by the several societies with their ministers, and moreover, admits the presence and hears the opinions of the whole church, the only *ex officio* members being the ministers, circuit stewards and secretary of the local preachers' meeting.

DISTRICT MEETINGS.

For the more ready and efficient carrying out of our discipline and enforcement of our laws, our work is divided into districts, each of these comprehending so many circuits as may be assembled with convenience, and to each of these districts, the annual conference appoints the chairman. These meetings are composed of all the travelling ministers within the jurisdiction of the district, together with an equal number of lay members freely chosen by the respective circuits as their representatives. These meetings are held twice in the year, the first in October, the other in May. The functions of these meetings are to maintain the discipline of the Connexion in the districts, both in relation to ministers and members. The October meeting arranges for Missionary anniversaries, and other special services, with a view to sustain the funds of the Connexion, and promote the work of God among the people. While the May meeting prepares the statistics, financial accounts, examining into the qualifications and personal character of probationary ministers, and all general matters in the district, so as to facilitate the business of the annual conference. These meetings, moreover, are a court of appeal to the district, and hold a general supervision of the circuits within their jurisdiction. Upon matters of emergency, a special meeting of the district may be convoked at any time, by the annual committee of the Connexion, or by request of the chairman of the district and any two of the ministers within the district; ten days notice of such meeting must in all cases be given to every superintending minister in the district. The annual committee must in

all cases of special meetings be notified, and no other business must be transacted than that specified in calling the meeting. In these meetings next in authority to our annual conference, there is, as in all our local church courts, a thorough lay representation in their constitution and equal rights secured to all their members.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

This is the highest legislative assembly and court of appeal in the Connexion. Its sessions are annual, and it represents all the circuits and stations in the Connexion, by ministerial and lay representation in equal numbers. This assembly holds a general supervision over the entire Connexion—stations its ministers, appropriates its funds, and finally determines in cases of appeal. By a vote by ballot, the Conference elects one of its number to preside over its deliberations and conduct its business, and also in the same manner it elects a secretary to record the resolutions of the meeting. A committee is elected by ballot, consisting of five members, two ministers and three laymen one year, and *vice versa* the next, whose business it is to station all the ministers. In conducting the business of this committee, all the ministers and lay delegates are consulted, and as far as possible the stations are arranged to meet the wishes and necessities of all. The committee, three times read their report, calling after the first and second readings for all dissatisfied with the arrangement to consult with them The third reading of the report is final. The Conference also appoints an annual committee of five, one year three ministers and two laymen and *vice versa* the next year, whose business it is to carry out the

resolutions of conference and to administer the laws of the Connexion from Conference to Conference. Of this committee the president of Conference and the General Superintendent of Missions are *ex-officio* members.

We have in the foregoing given a brief, yet comprehensive sketch of the characteristic features of our church polity as one of the members of the great Methodist family. These strongly marked features of church government which distinguish us from the Wesleyan body on the one hand, by admitting the laity into all the councils of the church, and from congregationalism on the other, by confederating the churches in connexional relation in the Conference for legislation and combined action, we conceive to be founded upon Bible authority, and of high moment in securing co-operation and practical efficiency in the church.

CHAPTER III.

CHURCH MEMBERS.

In seeking a home in any commuuity, whether civil, moral or religious, we naturally inquire, What obligations do we assume? and, What advantages do we acquire? These inquiries are only reasonable, and it is well for us to satisfy ourselves on these points ere we select and fix our home. The object of this chapter is to reply to these inquiries so far as they respect the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion Church. That it is a marked privilege to hold membership in the Church of God is evident, because it is Christ's family, and possesses immunities peculiar to itself; and that it is of solemn obligation

is evident from the fact it is of divine institution and authority. Arising out of the fact that the church in her various sections possesses varied degrees of church privileges, a ground for choice is presented to the inquirer for a church home.

Persons desirous of uniting with us in church fellowship are required to evidence an earnest concern for the salvation of their souls by a diligent attendance on our means of grace, and by ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well. When candidates are first admitted into our classes—which may be done by the minister or leader—they are considered as under the watch-care of the church until they give satisfactory evidence to the class of their religious experience, when they are received into full connection in the church. The mode of admission is, by the preacher, at a society meeting, by exhortation and prayer.

No person amongst us can be expelled, or even suspended from church privileges, until he has had a fair trial according to rule. Every accused person shall have sent to him officially a copy of the charges preferred against him, one week previous to trial, that he may be prepared to defend himself against such charges. The Quarterly, or a special Circuit meeting, is competent to inquire into any charge brought against any Circuit preacher, in regard to immoral conduct, preaching false doctrine, or gross neglect of duty; but no such charge shall be entertained unless the preacher has had seven day's previous notice of its nature and of the time of bringing it forward. In conducting this inquiry the meeting shall hear the charge and evidence in the presence of the preacher accused, and also his defence, after which it shall determine in the fear of God, acquitting, censuring

or suspending the accused preacher till the ensuing Conference—subject to the right of appeal to the Conference. When practicable, the Superintendent Preacher or Circuit Stewards shall previously consult or obtain the assistance of the Annual Committee, and, in all cases, shall give an early account of its proceedings to the corresponding member of the Annual Committee.

A layman may be tried by the Leader's Meeting, in the presence of the Superintendent Preacher; but where there is no Leaders' Meeting, the Society to which the accused belongs, with the Superintendent Preacher, or, in his absence, one of his brethren, is competent to try the accused person. But should the accused person object to this mode of trial, and be able to make it appear to the executive preacher that he is not likely to obtain justice from such trial, then he may be tried by a committee of five persons—two to be chosen by the accused, two by the accuser, the preacher to form the fifth, who shall be chairman, and have the casting vote; and, in case either the accused or the accuser, or both, refuse to select the said committee, the executive preacher shall supply the lack. Should any accused person feel aggrieved by the decision of the meeting appointed to try his case, he shall have the liberty of appealing to the Quarterly Conference of the Circuit, upon giving the Superintendent one week's notice of his intention.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the power to receive, to censure, to suspend or expel members is vested in the church, and not merely in the executive preacher or *ex officio* members of business meetings. We close this chapter with an extract from our published Discipline on

the duties of our church members. See DISCIPLINE, Sec. II. page 14.

"1. Persons admitted into church-fellowship with us shall be required to meet weekly in class, or as frequently as possible.

"2. For the support of the ministry amongst us, and to discharge other pecuniary demands (unless prevented by real inability), all our members are expected to contribute according to the ability with which God has blest them, that the deficiency of our poor members may be supplied.

"3. All our members shall diligently attend the public and private means of grace with which, as a religious community, we are favored; and especially that most invaluable ordinance, the Supper of the Lord.

"4. It is the duty of our members to cultivate a spirit of brotherly affection towards one another, and to manifest this spirit by promoting each other's welfare, preferring each other in business, advising each other in difficulty, and defending each other in character; encouraging to duty; admonishing in error, and restoring when fallen; comforting in distress, visiting in affliction, and assisting in need; thus shall we bear each other's burdens, and the household of faith will be established.

"5. Should one member consider himself injured by another, he shall conform to our Lord's direction:—'If thy brother shall trespass against thee go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother; but if he shall not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be

established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.'—Matt. xviii. 15—17.

"6. Brother ought not to go to law with brother, but should first endeavor to adjust existing differences through the mediation of mutual friends; and our members are exhorted to submit their differences to this reasonable and scriptural mode of adjustment.

"7. Should a member become insolvent, and make an assignment, or become bankrupt, or take the benefit of any Legislative Act, whereby he shall not pay his creditors their full demands, it shall be the duty of the church to inquire into such case, that the character of our upright but unfortunate members may be satisfactorily sustained, and that those who are guilty of dishonesty may be excluded from amongst us. It is also expected from those members who have failed in business, or have contracted debts for which they have ceased to be legally responsible, that, if they afterwards become possessed of property, they pay as soon as possible, their former deficiencies, and fulfil their former contracts.

"8. If a brother be overtaken in a fault, his Leader shall be informed thereof; when such Leader shall endeavor to restore his offending brother with faithfulness and affection.

"9. Any member guilty of causing disturbances, of indulging in slandering or tale-bearing, of refusing to pay his lawful debts, of propagating false doctrines, or refusing to be governed by our rules, or of immoral conduct, shall for the first offence be reproved; for the second, be suspended

from the enjoyment of church privileges for such time as shall be deemed necessary; and for the third, be expelled. But, should the crime be flagrant or notorious, then, upon due evidence thereof, he shall be put out immediately.

"10. Members removing from one class to another should explain to their Leader or to the Leaders' meeting their reasons for so doing, and when removing from one Circuit to another, they shall take with them a testimonial from the Superintendent or the Leaders' meeting, certifying that they are in good standing with the church from which they are removing.

"11. As forming part of the universal church of Christ, our people are called upon to entertain liberal feelings and to cherish a friendly disposition towards professing Christians of other denominations; and to evidence the same by allowing them a place at the Supper of the Lord, and in other social means of grace, by rendering them the kind offices of brethren, by giving them an interest in our prayers, and by rejoicing in their prosperity.

"12. It is incumbent upon our members, under the various circumstances, and in all the relations in which they are placed by divine providence, to exercise themselves to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man. As to their private duties, they should examine themselves whether they be in the faith, possessing the power as well as the form of godliness, and growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; they should search the scriptures daily; be regular in secret prayer; frequent in devout meditation; and in all things, walk humbly with God. As husbands and wives, they are to be patterns of fidelity, helpers to each other in their worldly cares and in the way to heaven. As parents, it devolves

upon them to provide for the temporal and spiritual wants of their children; attending to their instruction, leading them to the house of God, confirming their precepts by a holy example, and crowning the whole by their strict attention to the exercises of family devotion. The pious children united with us are by their good conduct to be the joy and comfort of their parents; behaving towards them with affection, and rendering to them due obedience; administering to them in necessity, and supporting them in old age. As members of civil society, it is the duty of all our people to submit themselves to the constituted authority of the state; to maintain the laws of the land; to promote peace and good order around them, and to implore the divine blessing on kings, governors, magistrates, and on all classes of our fellow subjects. As masters and servants, they are to be exemplary in performing their respective duties; as neighbors, to be kind; as friends, to be confidential; and to be courteous and benevolent in all their social intercourse. In the world, our people are to be diligent in business, punctual in their engagements, and upright in their dealings; useful in public offices, and faithful in all their trusts; to be patterns of temperance and frugality, avoiding places of dissipation and public amusement; to flee the appearance of evil, and to delight in the company of the righteous. They should never forget the high character which Christians are to sustain as the 'salt of the earth,' and the 'light of the world'; and that it is expressly enjoined by the great Head of the Church Himself: 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.'"

CHAPTER IV.

SCRIPTURE ARGUMENT.

While we heartily concede that the mere details of ecclesiastical arrangements have been left to be indicated by the peculiar exigencies of passing events and provided for by the church, yet we contend that a clear outline of the form, and the essential principles of the government of the Christian church are distinctly indicated in the word of God, and claim authority equal to any other doctrines or precepts in the Bible. But whatever latitude may be claimed in church legislation to meet the ever varying exigencies in the church, no arrangement is admissible that conflicts with the word of God; this is the ultimate authority in matters of church discipline as well as in doctrine. The margin of discretion left for the church to fill consists of such cases as have no specific provision made for them in the Scriptures, and arrangements of the church in such instances must be in consonance with the great principles as taught in the sacred volume. These principles are so many landmarks set down by authority of divine inspiration, for the guidance of the church in all her legislative arrangements and executive decisions. Our design in this chapter is to lay down some Bible principles in matters of church government, and briefly indicate the consonance of the statement of principles contained in the second chapter with these scripture teachings.

In Matthew xxiii. 8, our Saviour lays down the following maxim—applicable in all church legislation—"One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." We

have here laid down, by divine authority, two important principles in ecclesiastical arrangements, viz.:—1st, The supreme authority of Christ over the church, and 2nd, The equality of all its members. No legislation, therefore, of the church, can be scriptural or correct that in any sense degrades Christ from the headship of the church on the one hand, or that elevates man to a lordship over God's heritage on the other. These are principles that no exigency of circumstances can justify the violation of.—The context gives to this passage a clear and specific bearing. Our blessed Saviour had cited to censure the lordly and pedantic hauteur of the Pharisees and their love of praise, and warns his disciples that it should not be so amongst them, as the Pharisaic spirit was utterly inimical to the Christian brotherhood, and equally opposed to their subjection to Christ. The evil consequences of which our Saviour warns the disciples as resulting from human lordship in the church were twofold—severance from Christ their divine Master, and alienation from each other as brethren. We learn from these instructions of Jesus Christ that whoever assumes to exercise authority in the church inconsistent with these principles arrogates the authority of his Master and outrages the rights of his brother. We should not overlook the connection of human outrage and divine insult. To injure and outrage our brother is to arrogate the authority and insult the majesty of our blessed Lord and Master.

That the church, as such, legitimately appoints her varied members to office and spheres of activity, is clearly taught in the word of God; but the diversity of gifts and callings in the church does not destroy the mutual dependence of

its members upon each other, or the subjection of the whole to Christ. Paul likens the Christian church to a human body composed of various members, which perform various offices—"So we, being many, are one body in Christ Jesus, and every one members one of another." From the compound character of the church and the diversity of its gifts and offices, it is impossible that unity and order should exist apart from combining the whole in mutual interest and obligation to each other, and subjecting the whole in obedience to one head. Hence the divinely instituted arrangement is, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ in the church is a perpetual safeguard against human intolerance and despotism amongst brethren, for we cannot infringe the right of a brother without assuming the authority of our divine Master. Every infringement, therefore, of these fundamental principles must be disastrous to the best interests of the church.

In confirmation of the foregoing views, we quote again from the words of our Saviour, Matt. xx. 25—27: "But Jesus called them unto him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whoso will be great among you let him be your minister (literally deacon), and whoso will be chief let him be your servant." Here our blessed Master teaches us that the exercise of despotic power is characteristic of heathenism, opposed to the spirit and genius of Christianity, and utterly subversive of its best interests The Saviour, giving it an unqualified prohibition, says, "It shall not be so among you." Proud aspirings,

and grasping after dominion, however congenial to carnal natures, are utterly repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, and inimical to the Christian brotherhood. The great Master directs that "he that would be great should be their minister," or deacon—the lowest ecclesiastical office; and "he that would be chief should be their servant,"—the lowest secular office. To stamp such aspirings with marked disapprobation, he directs that degradation should be graduated in proportion to the height of their aspirations. The Saviour here inscribes on the porch and altar of the church, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." And then, to give the greater effect to his teachings, he quotes his own example, "The Son of Man came not be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." It was "enough that the servant should be as his Lord."

If we consider the relation which the word of God represents Christians as sustaining to each other, we shall be conducted to the same conclusion. The title *brethren*, by which the church is designated, indicates that all here are equal, and is designed to remind us of mutual obligations and dependencies. The characteristic mark of Christians of every age is, that they have love one for another (John xiii. 35); mutual submission (1 Peter v. 5); mutual forbearance (Ephesians iv. 2); mutual forgiveness, (Col. iii. 13); mutual preference and honor (Romans xii. 10). The specific directions given to the church in God's Word in relation to church discipline indicate clearly both the spirit and character of a correct and scriptural administration. Amongst these we have the following: Toward the weak,—"We, then, who are strong, ought to bear the

infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. xv. 1); toward the erring,—"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. vi. 1); toward one who has trespassed against us,—"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 15—17); toward a heretic,—"A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject" (Titus iii. 10). We have from these citations specific instructions for the administration of wholesome discipline towards the offending, and also for the government of our spirit and conduct toward the brethren. Moreover, from the nature of our relative duties, we see our true relation to each other as equals or brethren, and we see the unity of divine teachings, finding the same truths indicated in our relative duties that are in other places expressed in positive precept. We are conducted by this two-fold process to the same conclusion—fixing the great central elements of church government upon divine authority, and rendering adherence to these in all matters of church legislation and discipline of paramount obligation. We might extend the list of scripture quotations of kindred import to almost any length, but we regard one "thus saith the Lord" as conclusive beyond all successful contradiction.

It may set the matter in a clearer and stronger light to show how inspired apostles regarded and treated this subject. Any precedent drawn from apostolic usage must be regarded as of very high authority, and if found to agree with our views of bible instruction, goes to confirm and establish the correctness of such views. Happily we have a case to point. In the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we are furnished with an account of apostolic usages, reflecting clear light upon the subject. On the important question whether the converted Gentiles should be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses, the apostles and elders and the church met to confer, no one class of officers in the church arrogating to themselves authority to settle the matter. This is usually called the first Christian council of the church, and when we consider who composed it, some of its members being inspired by the Holy Ghost, and those who had both seen and heard the Saviour in the flesh, and were familiar with his teachings, their action on this occasion must be of the highest importance in our enquiries. Moreover, this council assembled by the immediate command of God, for Paul tells us (Gal. ii. 1, 5,) that they went up to Jerusalem by revelation. Paul had Titus with him on this occasion, and how many others we cannot tell—a number of laymen seem to have accompanied him to the Conference. The subject of discussion seems to have occasioned much disputation between Paul and Barnabas, and it was ultimately determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders for the settlement of the question. Now, observe, the apostles did not assume authority to determine the question at issue independently

of the laity, nor the laity independently of the apostles, but *together, as brethren* they determined in the matter of a deputation to Jerusalem. Again, the deputation was a mixed one, being sent by the determination of the church. The reception they met in Jerusalem also shows that the church there was under a discipline similar to the one from which they came, for we are told "they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders." Then as to the decisions of this council, we are told, (verse 22,) "Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas," &c. If ever there existed a case in which the ministry of the Christian church were entitled to sit in council alone, and decide for the whole church, this would have been one to point. The subject was one affecting Christian obligation and discipline amongst Gentile converts. The apostles, also, were men under divine inspiration, but they and the churches were brethren, and they met together and unitedly settled the question.—And we have this in the absence of any Scripture example to the contrary. If it be true that the apostles acted by divine inspiration, and in conformity with the command of their blessed Master, then it follows that the form of government adopted in this Christian council is of divine institution. We have, then, the plain precepts of Christ to his disciples, the relative duties of Christians toward each other, and the example of inspired apostles acting under the direction of these precepts and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and all teaching the same thing. It is exceedingly difficult to imagine anything more conclusive than this striking concurrence of testimony to one point.—

What is announced in positive precept is fairly implied in relative duties, and illustrated in the action of inspired apostles rendering adherence to these great principles, we humbly conceive, of paramount obligation to the Christian church in all her legislation.

The discipline and usages of the Canadian Wesleyan Methodist New Connexion church are founded on these great principles taught in the word of God, and we conceive that the consonance of the former with the latter is sufficiently obvious to carry conviction to every unprejudiced mind that carefully compares the one with the other. In all the business meetings of our church, from the leaders' meeting to the annual Conference, "all ye are brethren" lays at the basis of each organization, and constitutes the spirit of each meeting. Though we do not claim that our church discipline is perfect in all its details, as this would be too high a tribute for any institution in which mortals are concerned, yet we claim for it conformity to the word of God in all its great principles—indeed, that these principles are manifestly taught in the word of God.

In conclusion, let me urge upon the attention of the reader of this little treatise, the first, and of all others the most important liberty, is the liberty from *sin*, that with which Christ makes his people free. This is the foundation of all true liberty. Without this you have no rights to defend, no liberty to conserve. You are the subject and slave of sin, of Satan. No church organization can give liberty to a man enslaved by sin. Unless you have been made free by the blood of atonenement, you have no right in the church of Christ—not even the right of membership, and if your name is enrolled in the record of the church, it is

because you have "climbed up some other way," as "a thief and a robber."

I beseech you, as you prize your soul, lay the foundation of freedom in "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Whatever importance we attach to church liberties to the people of God, these are all after considerations with you. The first matter with you is, that your sins are pardoned, and you constituted free in Christ Jesus. This great work accomplished, and then all the immunities of a brother in the household of faith are chartered to you in the word of God. Nor should we, as living members of the church of Jesus Christ, forget that the highest standard of religious liberty to which we may attain is freedom from all sin—to be enfranchised in all the graces of Christian holiness. We do not say to you, Prize your privileges of Church organization *less*, or regard the infusion of the lay element in all the councils of the church as a matter of minor importance—we regard this as the palladium of liberty in the church, and promotive of its best interests—but we would say with emphasis, Prize your liberties of entire consecration to God and ripened holiness *more*. Indeed, we would appeal to the love you bear to our church organization as a motive to increased holiness. If you would give currency to *liberal, scriptural* principles of church government—if you would see the church of your choice prosper and its distinguishing principles acknowledged as being of God, then cultivate holiness. However ardently you may desire to see our church prosper, and its distinguishing features known and respected in society, you are, though it may be unconsciously, yet effectually, crippling and wasting her best

energies, misrepresenting her principles and retarding her progress, unless you are cultivating holiness. We want a right *form*, but this will not serve us, unless we have the *life* and *power* in the form. As you prize your liberty, as you prize the prosperity of the church, as you prize the salvation of souls, cultivate holiness. Let us go and cast ourselves upon the altar of consecration, and inscribe on the walls of our Zion, "Holiness unto the Lord." Then with our Christian liberty baptized in the spirit of devout piety, our Zion shall "come forth out of the wilderness," replete in the graces of holiness, "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."